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Sports is his thing

"Sports is his thing. That's what he knows!" laughs Jackie Deas, SCVRD counselor.

She's describing Will Small, and like everyone who talks about Will, she's smiling.

Will, who has a learning disability, was referred to the Charleston Vocational Rehabilitation Area Office from West Ashley High School. During his senior year he, along with other students, attended the VR Work Training Center for five hours each week.

"Will did a fantastic job at the training center," she says. "He has learned budgeting skills, life skills, social skills and how to work with others. We also helped him get his resume together, helped him with job readiness training and supported employment."

"Voc Rehab helped me manage my time better," explains Will. "I also learned what I needed to ask at my interview and how to speak professionally."

Prior to graduating from high school, the transition specialist at West Ashley got Will a volunteer position with the Charleston RiverDogs baseball team.

"Lauren and I got involved then to help Will learn how to be a food runner," says Deas, referring to SCVRD job coach Lauren Thompson. "When the RiverDogs position ended in September, we knew we needed to stick with sports."

Counseling and guidance, and really listening to what Will wanted to do, was crucial.

"He *is* sports," Deas emphasizes. "You can't fit him into a position just because there is an opening. I wanted to find something that's all Will."

That something turned out to be a job working with the Citadel Military College Athletic Department.

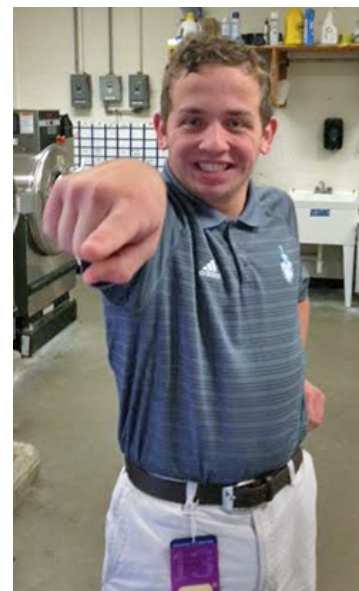
"Will handles all of our equipment needs for football, anything from laundry to passing out gear, practice setup, field setup, and assisting in some drills during practice," says Kevin Yeager, Head Athletic Equipment Manager at the Citadel.

"With football season ending, he'll be transitioning over to basketball, and then to baseball season after that."

Yeager wanted to bring Will in for a formal job interview and arranged it with Thompson.

"I wanted to see what his capabilities and limitations were," says Yeager. "Will was as nervous as a hot toad on a freeway, but he hit a home run. I found out later that he called his dad after the interview and told him, 'Dad, I nailed it!'"

"I went in and helped him learn the job," says Thompson. "Now, every time I go by there, he's learned a new task."



Will Small, Equipment Manager, Citadel Military College Athletic Department.

"Lauren has, from day one, made sure that Will is completely comfortable in his environment," says Yeager, "which is very important because when Will is outside of his comfort zone he gets nervous. She spent several days with him making sure he was properly doing the tasks that were assigned to him. I'm a pretty particular guy in what we do and there are certain ways to do things. She was very good in helping him make sure that was done. She drops in about once a week just to check on him. She even rode with him on his Tel-A-Ride the first day because he was real uncomfortable riding by himself."

Tel-A-Ride is a bus service providing local transportation through the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA). Rather than using traditional bus stops, they drop Will off at the location he needs to go to.

"I asked him if he wanted me to ride with him the second day," says Thompson, smiling, "and he said, 'I got this.'"



(l to r) Lauren Thompson, SCVRD Job Coach; Kevin Yeager, Head Athletic Equipment Manager at the Citadel; Will Small; and Jackie Deas, SCVRD Counselor.

Says Deas, "I've watched Will go from being a kid at West Ashley HS to, 'I have a career. I have a job like everybody else, working Monday to Friday. I'm an adult. I've arrived. I'm a working citizen.'"

"Voc Rehab has prepared him for what he's doing now," says Yeager. "He'll probably be here at this job longer than I will." And he smiles and laughs.

To Will, the most important thing that VR helped him with was getting out in the community and finding the right job.

"It feels good to have a job," he says with pride.

"Our thoughts are that this will be a long term solution to a wonderful life," reflects Cherie Small, Will's mother. "The Citadel has been great for him. The cadets have embraced him. His boss is great. They are a family."

She smiles and adds, "I told Will, 'Do you realize how fortunate you are that you get to go to work and do what you love to do every day?'"

"Everything is not for everybody," explains Deas. "So you have to be open to hearing what people want. You have to make sure it's a great fit. When

you have a great fit the clients will stay there. Don't just put somebody on a job. It has to always be individualized. It may take a little longer, but that's fine."

Around the state

Open House and Disability Mentoring Day events around the state



Throughout October and November, [SCVRD offices around the state held Open House and Disability Mentoring Day \(DMD\) events.](#)

Senator Alexander visits Oconee-Pickens DMD



Guests including Sandra Pruitt, from the Oconee DSS and Family Friends program; Darryl Broome, Director of the Foothills Area YMCA; a representative from the Department of Juvenile Justice; Greg Oliver, from the Seneca Journal; Johanna Steigerwald, VR counselor; and Senator Thomas Alexander listen to a VR client describe the tasks he does in the Oconee-Pickens Work Training Center.

[More DMD and Open House Events](#)

[View more pictures of and read more about events](#) at our Greenville.

SSA Commissioner visits Charleston DDS



The Charleston Disability Determination Services (DDS) was honored to be visited by Social Security Administration (SSA) Acting Commissioner Carolyn Colvin during her recent trip to Charleston.

DDS Director Shirley Jarrett and SCVRD Commissioner Barbara Hollis, together with other DDS senior management and staff, met with Commissioner Colvin. Colvin thanked the DDS staff for their efforts in processing disability claims, updated them on agency initiatives, and addressed questions from the staff.

Charleston DDS also hosted a meeting in which Colvin met with community advocates from many agencies across the region. She discussed Social Security program initiatives, and answered questions raised by the advocates.

Commissioner Hollis and Director Jarrett were eager to meet Colvin and extremely pleased with her visit. They expressed their sincere gratitude to Blake Monson and the Charleston DDS office staff for the great job that they did preparing and hosting Colvin's visit.

Pictured (l to r, back row): Ken Norris, Administrative Services Manager, SC DDS; Blake Monson, Regional Supervisor, Charleston DDS; Michael Grochowski, Atlanta Regional Commissioner, SSA; Howard Bowles, South Carolina Area Director, SSA.

(l to r, front row): Stacy Rodgers, Senior Advisor to the Acting Commissioner, SSA; Shirley Jarrett, Director, SC DDS; Carolyn Colvin, Acting Commissioner, SSA; Barbara Hollis, Commissioner, SCVRD; Anne Mayo, Operations Manager, SC DDS.

Bounce Back Workshop in Orangeburg



Twenty-four clients and a number of staff members attended the "Bounce Back Workshop" at the Orangeburg SCVRD office on September 11, 2013. This full-day event was devoted to helping individuals with criminal

backgrounds locate needed resources and prepare for employment.

Two successful former SCVRD clients with criminal backgrounds spoke to the clients. Presentations were also given by the Department of Motor Vehicles, Orangeburg County Library System, representatives from the Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College Adult Education program, St. Matthews Quick Jobs Center, the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services, SCVRD personnel (which included job preparation and application information), Greenville Technical College, and the Orangeburg County Solicitor's Office.

Clients who attended say they found the information presented to be useful and inspirational. As a result of the program, several referrals to potential employers were made by presenters and SCVRD staff. One client attendee had a job interview scheduled within three business days of the event.

PR for VR in Oconee-Pickens



Lisa Gillespie, left, Oconee-Pickens Center Manager, and Beverly Smith, right, Counselor, were guests on *Coffee Time* with DJ Chad Dorsett on local radio station WSNW 103.3 on October 17, 2013. The thirty minute program was dedicated to promoting Oconee-Pickens' Open House and Disability Mentoring Day held on October 31.

Did you know...

...that SCVRD's agency board has been under the leadership of only three board chairmen since the department became an independent state agency in 1957?

J.C. Horne of Denmark was the first chairman, serving with distinction until 1968.



The iconic E. Roy Stone Jr. of Greenville provided strong leadership for 33 years, chairing from 1968 until his passing in



Since 2001 Derle A. Lowder Sr. of Sumter has brought outstanding guidance and unwavering support of SCVRD staff as chairman of the agency board.



Events

Rock Hill

- December 4 - **Legislator Appreciation Breakfast** at the Rock Hill Area Office. Local employers will talk about the benefits of working with SCVRD. Legislators will be invited to tour the Work Training Center.



Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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